GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
AGRICULTURE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:971
ANSWERED ON:08.12.2003
CONTAMINATED VEGETABLES
DINESH CHANDRA YADAV

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a)whether the Government are aware of the highly contaminated vegetables being sold in the city`s vegetable market;

(b)if so, whether the Government have made any scientific study of the vegetables being sold at the city`s prominent markets to assess the extent of contamination;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d)the measures taken by the Government to tackle the problem;

(e) whether there is any Government agency to monitor the quality of fresh vegetables; and

(f)if so, the details thereof?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV)

(a) to (c):Yes, Sir. The monitoring study carried out by the All India Coordinated ResearchProject on Pesticide Residue conducted by ICAR has recorded that out of 4100 samples of 31vegetables taken, 55 samples were found contaminated with pesticide residues, but in only 9% of the samples, the residues exceeded the maximum residue limits.

Some samples of vegetables collected from Peri-urban areas around Delhi have shownpresence of lead, zinc and cadmium above the safe limits. This contamination has been found especially from areas where crops has been irrigated with sewage water or industrial effluents. Areas with high vehicular exhaust pollution such as market places have also shown heavy contamination.

A study has been conducted by Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi andImperial College of London to find out the contamination of metals in vegetables ground in and around Delhi. In this Study, several vegetable samples of spinach, okra and cauliflower were collected from the Peri-urban areas of Delhi viz., Yamuna Pusta, Okhla, Ballabhgarh, Najafgarhand Alipur and their nearby markets during 2001 and 2002. These were analysed for the presence of heavy metals. The study has shown that in some of the samples collected from Yamunapusta, Najafgarh and Okhla, the level of contamination with zinc, lead and cadmium was higher than the prescribed tolerance limit. None of the samples had copper above the permissible limit. The main reasons for heavy metals accumulation in vegetables are irrigation with sewage water and industrial effluents. Aerial deposition from thermal plants and vehicular exhaust are other major sources of heavy metals.

During the period 1979-2001 the Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry ofHealth and Family Welfare has conducted five surveys for presence of pesticide residues of different pesticides in food commodities including vegetables. The residues of pesticides were found to be within the prescribed maximum residue limits.

(d): The Government of India is encouraging the judicious approach in the use of pesticides through constant training of the farmers for observance of recommended pre-haarvest waiting periods, proper method of spraying, use of quality pesticides with proper dose and application technology and safe disposal of left over pesticides. Government of India is also promoting Integrated Pest Management (IPM) which inter alia includes cultural, mechanical, biological pest control methods to reduce the consumption of pesticides.

(e) & (f): The State Department of Health are the implementing agencies to monitor thequality of fresh vegetables under Prevention of Food Adulteration Act and Rules framed thereunder.